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ABSTRACT

The paper contains some ideas to help new teachers coming to the Hopi Indian Reservation. There are certain cultural values and taboos which the Hopi people take for granted but which non-Indians do not have. This paper gives teachers an idea of some areas which have proved to be sensitive in the past. Listed are 6 areas, such as not using snakes in the classroom since they belong to snake clan and are used for religious ceremonies. Also listed are 8 superstitions which Hopis may or may not believe--e.g., ants can get under the skin and cause bad sores, so teachers might want to think twice about an ant farm. Seven general observations are also listed--e.g., pipes have religious significance and probably should not be made by children at school. This paper is meant to make teachers aware of the Hopi culture so that they may develop alternatives that offend as few as possible. Two professional organizations to consult for assistance are mentioned--the Hopi Education Association and the National Council of Bureau of Indian Affairs Educators. (FF)

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# CULTURAL AWARENESS FOR NEW TEACHERS TO HOPI

Welcome to teaching on the Hopi reservation. You will surely find teaching Hopi children a rewarding experience, and just living in this desolate but beautiful country will be exciting for you.

If you are Hopi, most of what is in this paper you will already know. However if you are not Hopi, this paper may contain some ideas or suggestions which will be helpful to you in your teaching or in your dealings with the Hopi people outside of the school.

There are certain values and taboos in the Hopi culture which the Hopi people take for granted but which Anglos do not have. The Anglos who have taught on the reservation for several years have discovered most of these either through making mistakes or by being told by a Hopi. It is hoped that this paper will help you avoid some awkward situations by informing you of some of the sensitive areas before you try some teaching situation using something which might make some of the Hopi upset with you.

First, though, there are very few hard and fast rules which pervade Hopi culture across the three mesas. The idea of this paper is to give you an idea of some areas which have proved to be sensitive in the past. It will be up to you to check with the Hopi teachers and aides in your own school as to the validity of the suggestions for your specific situation.

1. Snakes should not be used in the classroom. They belong to snake clan and are used for religious ceremonies.

2. Lizards and horned toads may be sensitive also. It is supposed to be bad to let such an animal die while you have it captive. The cameleons used in some of the SCIS lessons may be sensitive in your location too. Any animal held captive should be well cared for.

3. Beans are used for special religious observances at bean dance in February. You should be careful about planting beans, especially in the winter. Taking bean seeds apart and letting them grow on wet paper, as in level 5 of SCIS seems to be OK, but check before doing it. Planting in the spring is probably OK and peas seem to be a good substitute for beans in most cases at any time.

4. Forced growth, using the umbrella lamps in SCIS, may be sensitive. Growing plants in the dark can be too, though it seems to be OK if you use grass instead of beans. Avoid any reference to bean dance when doing this.

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5. In some locations the use of corn, beans, and squash in the first grade SCIS unit has been replaced with peas and tomatoes with better feelings from the community.

6. Sensitivity has been shown on third mesa toward the use of frogs in the classroom, at second mesa toward having fish in the room, and first mesa toward the use of shells and fossils. All of these belong to certain clans or societies and may or may not be OK to use, depending on the situation.

Here are some superstition which some Hopis believe and others do not. Reactions to them vary from "yes, that one is true. I remember when..." to "No one believes that one". They are presented here with the idea that an awareness of them may help you affect better public relations between the school and some members of the community. Again, check with your local teachers and aides.

1. Don't point at a rainbow. It might keep the rain from coming back. If you point at a rainbow you are supposed to bite your finger hard.

2. It is OK to talk about rain when it is not raining, but when it is raining you should to on about your business as if it were not.

3. Geodes should be broken in half if kept. Otherwise they can cause sores or corns on the bottom of the feet. Some say not to handle geodes at all.

4. Ants can get under the skin and cause bad sores, so you might want to think twice about an ant farm.

5. Some are offended at killing of spiders.

6. Playing with fire can cause sores around the mouth and tongue. This may include candles and matches.

7. Eating in the dark can cause sores at the corners of the mouth.

8. Stealing can cause sores, spitting on another can cause warts, lying can cause deep sores.

Just some general observations:

1. Pipes have religious significance and probably should not be made by children at school. Check locally.

2. Clay and paper machee heads are OK to make, but should not be hollowed out to resemble masks. Be careful about the Halloween masks made in school that they do not resemble kachinas.

3. Hopi culture is not time and number oriented in the same way as is Anglo culture, so expect to use extra patience in these areas. There is no such thing as minutes and seconds in Hopi culture.

4. Picture taking in most villages is frowned upon.

5. There are shrines scattered all over the countryside. Avoid them whenever possible. Prayer feathers and artifacts present there or elsewhere should never be disturbed.

6. Eagles are captured and kept for ceremonial purposes. They are sometimes given gifts which should not be disturbed.

7. Dances are religious observances. Dresses or long pants are considered appropriate dress for women and sport shirts and long pants for men. Hopi women may be permitted to tape the performance but Anglos are not. Of course picture taking and sketching is not allowed. Hopis should have preference for front row positions, so expect to move back as more people come to observe the dance. Take your cue for appropriate conduct at ceremonies from the Hopis in the audience.

With these few specific cultural aspects in mind, and keeping in mind that you are teaching in a culture other than that in which you grew up, you should be able to have a very successful and enjoyable teaching career on the Hopi reservation.

The suggestions in this paper are not meant to inhibit your teaching. You should not feel that you must avoid concepts which you feel are important. Rather, this paper is meant to make you aware of some of the aspects of the Hopi culture in order that you can find alternative ways of presenting those ideas so as to offend as few as possible.

If for some reason you urn into some problem with which your aides and Hopi teachers are unable to help, or if you have some problem or question which does not pertain to Hopi culture at all, your principal should be glad to assist. There are also at least two professional organizations whose prime function is to give you assistance. These are the HEA (Hopi Education Association) and the NCBIAE (National Council of Bureau of Indian Affairs Educators).

There is most likely at least one representative of these organizations in each building. That representative will be able to help you or can suggest someone who will. These organizations are to help you. Support them and use them.

This paper was compiled by Robert Rhodes with the kind assistance of numerous Hopi teachers, aides, and community members from all three mesas. Any errors or omissions, however, would be those of the compiler rather than anyone else.

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